Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended)   A method for use in a computer system ~~capable of taking~~ to identify actions with regard to data objects, the method comprising:

determining a rule type that is needed by a computer system in selecting a particular action to be taken with regard to a data object;

identifying an access procedure associated with the rule type that specifies which query attributes are to be used, the access procedure comprising a sequence of access rules, each of which access rules identifies at least one of the query attributes to be used;

retrieving the query attributes from a context associated with the data object;

searching an attribute database with at least one of the query attributes identified by a first access rule of the access procedure; and

[[if]] determining whether the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule matches a first attribute set in the attribute database, and if so: (i) accessing in a rule database a first rule that belongs to the rule type and that is identified by the first attribute set, the first rule specifying the particular action to be taken by the computer system with regard to the data object, wherein each of a plurality of rules in the rule database is capable of being identified by any of a plurality of attribute sets in the attribute database; and (ii) generating an output that identifies the particular action.

2. (Original)   The method of claim 1, wherein no matching attribute set exists when the attribute database is searched with the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule, further comprising searching the attribute database with at least another one of the query attributes identified by a second access rule of the first access procedure.

3. (Original)   The method of claim 2, wherein the at least another one of the query attributes identified by the second access rule matches a second attribute set in the attribute database, further comprising accessing in the rule database a second rule that belongs to the rule type and that is identified by the second attribute set, the second rule specifying the particular action to be taken by the computer system.

4. (Original)   The method of claim 2, wherein the second access rule identifies at least one of the query attributes that is also identified by the first access rule.

5. (Original)   The method of claim 1, wherein the first rule is accessed because the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule matches a first attribute set in the attribute database, further comprising causing the computer system to take the particular action with regard to the data object as specified by the first rule.

6. (Original)   The method of claim 5, wherein the particular action comprises shipping a product to a customer, and wherein the first rule specifies a shipping term.

7. (Original)   The method of claim 1, wherein the query attributes are selected from the group consisting of: customer, product, time, day, country, currency, and combinations thereof.

8. (Currently amended)   A computer system comprising:
a rule database comprising a plurality of rules specifying particular actions that the computer system can take with regard to a data object, each of which rules belongs to one of a plurality of rule types;
an attribute database comprising a plurality of attribute sets, each of which attribute sets identifies one of the plurality of rules in the rule database, wherein each of the plurality of rules is capable of being identified by any of the plurality of attribute sets; ~~and~~
a plurality of access procedures specifying which query attributes are to be used in searching the attribute database, each of which access procedures is associated with one of the

plurality of rule types and comprises a sequence of access rules, each of which access rules identifies at least one of the query attributes to be used; and

a device generating an output that identifies one of the particular actions.

9. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein a first rule of the plurality of rules comprises a plurality of rule values and wherein the computer system uses the plurality of rule values when taking the particular action as specified by the first rule.

10. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein more than one of the plurality of rules belongs to a first rule type of the plurality of rule types.

11. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein the query attributes are selected from the group consisting of: customer, product, time, day, country, currency, and combinations thereof.

12. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein a first attribute set in the attribute database includes one attribute.

13. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein a first access procedure of the plurality of access procedures includes a first access rule and a second access rule.

14. (Original) The computer system of claim 13, wherein the sequence comprises that the first access rule be used before the second access rule.

15. (Original) The computer system of claim 13, wherein the first access rule identifies at least a first query attribute that the second access rule does not identify.

16. (Original) The computer system of claim 13, wherein the first access rule identifies at least a first query attribute that is also identified by the second access rule.

17. (Original) The computer system of claim 13, wherein the first access rule identifies a different number of the query attributes than does the second access rule.

18. (Original) The computer system of claim 17, wherein the sequence comprises that the first access rule be used before the second access rule, and wherein the second access rule identifies fewer of the query attributes than does the first access rule.

19. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, further comprising an electronic business transaction that relates to the data object and that specifies a first rule type among the plurality of rule types.

20. (Original) The computer system of claim 19, wherein a first access procedure is associated with the first rule type, and wherein the first access procedure specifies the query attributes.

21. (Original) The computer system of claim 20, wherein a first access rule of the first access procedure identifies at least one of the query attributes to be used.

22. (Original) The computer system of claim 21, wherein the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule matches a first attribute set in the attribute database, and wherein the first attribute set identifies a first rule in the rule database.

23. (Original) The computer system of claim 22, wherein no attribute set in the attribute database matches the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule, further comprising a second access rule of the first access procedure that identifies at least another one of the query attributes to be used.

24. (Original) The computer system of claim 19, wherein the business transaction is a sales order.

25. (Original) The computer system of claim 24, wherein the first rule type is shipping rules.

26. (Original) The computer system of claim 25, wherein a first rule belonging to the first rule type specifies a shipping term.

27. (Original) The computer system of claim 8, wherein at least one of the plurality of attribute sets is time dependent.

28. (Currently amended) A computer system comprising:

a first input function for a user to create a rule database comprising a plurality of rules specifying particular actions that the computer system can take with regard to a data object, the first input function providing that the user can specify one of a plurality of rule types for each of the rules;

a second input function for the user to create an attribute database comprising a plurality of attribute sets, the second input function providing that the user can specify one of the plurality of rules in the rule database to be identified by each of the attribute sets, wherein each of the plurality of rules is capable of being identified by any of the plurality of attribute sets; and

a third input function for the user to create a plurality of access procedures specifying which query attributes are to be used in searching the attribute database, the third input function providing that the user can associate each of the access procedures with one of the plurality of rule types and define a sequence of access rules for each of the access procedures, the third input function further providing that the user can specify at least one of the query attributes to be identified by each of the access rules; and

at least one storage device for storing the rule database, the attribute database, and the plurality of access procedures.

29. (Original) The computer system of claim 28, wherein the user can perform a simulated access to at least one of the plurality of business rules.

30. (Original) The computer system of claim 29, wherein the simulated access provides that the user can specify a first rule type of the plurality of rule types and specify the query attributes to be used, and wherein the simulated access results in a first rule of the plurality of rules being identified by a first attribute set of the plurality of attribute sets.

31. (Original) The computer system of claim 30, wherein the second input function provides that the user can modify the first attribute set to identify a different one of the plurality of rules.

32. (Original) The computer system of claim 30, wherein the third input function provides that the user can modify a first access procedure in which the first attribute set was matched with at least one of the query attributes.

33. (Currently amended) A computer program product embodied in a physical machine-readable storage medium and containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to perform operations comprising:

determine a rule type that is needed by a computer system in selecting a particular action to be taken with regard to a data object;

identify an access procedure associated with the rule type that specifies which query attributes are to be used, the access procedure comprising a sequence of access rules, each of which access rules identifies at least one of the query attributes to be used;

retrieve the query attributes from a context associated with the data object;

search an attribute database with at least one of the query attributes identified by a first access rule of the access procedure; and

[[if]] determine whether the at least one of the query attributes identified by the first access rule matches a first attribute set in the attribute database, and if so: (i) access in a rule database a first rule that belongs to the rule type and that is identified by the first attribute set, the first rule specifying the particular action to be taken by the computer system with regard to the data object, wherein each of a plurality of rules in the rule database is capable of being identified

by any of a plurality of attribute sets in the attribute database; and (ii) generate an output that identifies the particular action.